

LETTERS TO A CHRISTIAN FRIEND ON THE  
FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF JUDAISM — C. ROTHSCHILD



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# LETTERS TO A CHRISTIAN FRIEND

ON THE

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF JUDAISM.

BY

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(BORN JUNE 14TH, 1845; DIED OCTOBER 18TH, 1865)

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## DEDICATION.

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THE readers of this little volume cannot fail to perceive, in the lofty sentiments and elevating thoughts which it embodies, the loving heart and noble mind of its young and lamented authoress.

During a short life of twenty summers, the intervals of health which she enjoyed were very few ; but her perfect trust in God enabled her to bear, without a murmur, all her sufferings. Her constant desire was to benefit her fellow-creatures ; but as, unfortunately, her health would not permit her to be actively employed

## DEDICATION.

in their service, she wrote the following letters, in the hope of imbuing those who might read them with a loftier conception of the sublime Truth of that beloved Faith, which upheld her through long days of suffering and pain, and enabled her to meet death with pious resignation.

All her hopes were fixed on the glorious future that awaited her in the world to come. Religion, in its truest and most beautiful form, was the guiding star both of her thoughts and actions; and the love and charity she evinced for all God's creatures, proved how entirely she carried into effect that Divine precept of Judaism :

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.

L. C.

*February, 1869.*

# CONTENTS.

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| FIRST LETTER.—INTRODUCTION . . .             | 1    |
| SECOND LETTER.—MISSIONARIES . . . .          | 4    |
| THIRD LETTER.—SALVATION THROUGH FAITH. .     | 12   |
| FOURTH LETTER.—ORIGINAL SIN . . . .          | 21   |
| FIFTH LETTER.—THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT .    | 31   |
| SIXTH LETTER.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE MESSIAH .  | 39   |
| SEVENTH LETTER.—ISRAEL THE CHOSEN . . .      | 49   |
| EIGHTH LETTER.—LOVE AND JUSTICE IN JUDAISM . | 63   |
| NINTH LETTER.—GOD OUR FATHER . . . .         | 80   |



# FIRST LETTER.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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*Frankfort a/M., June 14th, 1861.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,

I have arrived here quite safely, and my first thought is to inform you thereof.

I cannot express how lonely and forlorn I feel in this great city, although it is my home. I miss the beautiful spot where we spent so many happy hours together. But although we are separated, do not let our pleasant conversations be interrupted, my dear friend.

My somewhat sudden departure prevented my answering verbally your manifold questions concerning the Jewish Religion, but they are

far too important to be passed over in silence. Let us therefore write to each other (as two sincere friends always should) without reserve. I know how deeply and fervently you are impressed with the religion of your fathers, and I, for my part, will not say a single word against it; but I must ask you to endeavour to know *my* faith in its real light, not as it is often judged, and, perhaps, misunderstood by others, and I think even by you, dear Ellen.

For centuries the Jews and Judaism have, without any real cause, been the objects of hatred and persecution. One excuse after another has been brought forward to calumniate and injure our religion, but without success. It stands upright and unshaken in its truth,—a banner around which all the nations will one day rally; for the time will come when through its instrumentality all mankind will assemble to unite in the glorification of the one true God.

For this reason, we Jews never dispute the aims and intentions of other creeds; but we

are anxious that every opportunity should be afforded us to defend our religion and make known to the world its great calling.

I leave it to you to fix the subject for my next letter. Tell me openly all your doubts about my religion and those who profess it. I promise, in return, to answer faithfully every question you may put to me. I look forward impatiently to the arrival of your letter. Until then, farewell, and believe me in true and unchanging affection,

Your loving

ESTHER IZATES.

## SECOND LETTER.

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MISSIONARIES.

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*Frankfort a/M., July 8th, 1861.*

DEAR ELLEN,

I thank you for your welcome letter, and more especially for your cordial consent to my proposal, that Religion should be the important subject of our future correspondence.

Allow me to repeat in your own words the first question you address to me. You say, "If the Jews entertain so strong a faith in their religion, as to believe that it will one day embrace the whole of humanity, why then," you ask with apparent reason, "do they not establish missionaries, as the Christians do at

such great sacrifices, for the propagation of their creed ? ”

I acknowledge with due respect the great sacrifices of the Christian Missionary Societies, and especially the individual courage of those who leave their native country, and sometimes their beloved families, to spread their faith in foreign lands, and who often reap ingratitude and strife as the only reward for all their trouble and pious zeal.

These men, true to their vocation, follow the calling of their hereditary religion ; for the calling of Christianity is to propagate its doctrines, and thus to impart to the Heathen clear conceptions of divine things. The calling of Judaism is quite different. *Our* vocation is to preserve the doctrine of the One Only God, and to guard it from all disturbance and all change. As we are but a small people, it is easier to fulfil this vocation than any other. We know that Christianity exists, and will continue to exist, so long as there are Pagans to convert, and that thereby all mankind will be gradually

led to our one common Father. Thus we look upon Christians as our friends (although they often regard *us* as enemies), and we recognise all the good they work ; for we know they are in God's hands, and that they only accomplish what He wills.

Judaism which must preserve for us and for all mankind the unity of God, pure and intact, avoids the conversion of others, in case the converts might bring over some pagan feelings and customs, which might disturb the purity and simplicity of our doctrines.

We, therefore, naturally remain a great minority among nations ; but although our numbers are small, our courage is great, and we should certainly not fail in finding brave men ready to become missionaries of Judaism, if we stood in need of their services. But those who have been accustomed to bow down before visible gods, would not be able to comprehend directly the doctrine of Judaism,—that of the incorporeal, invisible, and purely spiritual God. Therefore, through God's holy decree, other

religions facilitate the path to the great goal, and Christianity and Mahometanism become the messengers of Judaism to mankind.

What pleasure fills our hearts when we see that as years progress, the knowledge of God improves and increases. Through the spread of biblical ideas, customs become more and more civilized, and the fulfilment of the promise of our greatest prophet is more clearly realized by mankind. At the same time, the Israelites are ever more kindly treated, and it becomes more generally known that our ancient God is one and unchangeable,—the same God who forgot not His people, because they suffered for the truth, and has doubly blessed them by confiding to their everlasting care the original and pure source of His doctrine.

I beg you to take your Bible and to read the beautiful words in Zechariah xiv. 8, 9:

“And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them towards the former sea, and half of them

towards the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one God and his name One.”

Oh, dear Ellen, this sublime verse alone would be enough to convince us of God’s truth, and to teach us to know the calling of our separate religions and our common future. The living water, of which the Prophet speaks, is the knowledge of God, in a word,—Religion. Jerusalem is the type of Judaism, enthroned on Zion’s heights. From *her* did the stream go forth, but the source remained everlasting in its purity. Christianity and Mahometanism rushed forth, one to the East, the other to the West. Both are the living waters which the Eternal sent out to proclaim the Existence and Attributes of God, but Judaism is the fountain whence the streams shall be purified.

We, therefore, fully recognise the mission of other religions, but ask that our mission should be likewise recognised, and that Christians should not endeavour to convert us. That the

missionaries of Christianity should have attempted to convert Jews, was always a great error; for we stand permanently near unto God. The mission of Christians is to convert the Heathen, who, although recognizing the existence of a Higher Power, fall into a thousand errors, and possess no holy writings in which they can search out Truth. Unhappily, many Jews have allowed themselves to be converted. The great Macaulay remarked: "There will always be a strong presumption against the sincerity of a conversion, by which the convert is directly a gainer" (Macaulay, vol. ii., Dryden); and as Christianity is the prevailing religion and many interests are in consequence bound up with it, it may be asserted that thoughts of pride and ambition generally influence those who forsake the Jewish religion, and that they therefore commit the greatest sin,—that of acting falsely towards the Almighty.

Rarely has *conviction* occasioned such conversions. Indifference and moral weakness, which could not be overcome, may often have

led the transgressors to barter all that was highest, even their peace of mind, for gold and earthly happiness. We, therefore, will remain true to the religion of our fathers, and try to work within it as much good as possible.

The time will come when we shall be brought together and united ; when the heathen world will be converted, and when all other biblical creeds will be purified from everything that separates them from Judaism. “For in that day will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent” (Zephaniah iii. 9).

Until then shall Christianity work outwardly to elevate the Heathen, and Judaism watch inwardly to protect the pure doctrine of Unity.

As regards sacrifices for religion, no nation has made so many as the Jews, who have often given up their possessions and shed their blood for their faith.

Refer for a moment to the History of the Jews, and convince yourself of the sad part our poor nation has played among other nations. The Jews, after having left the land of their fathers, were pursued, chased from one country to another, insulted, derided, and repaid with ingratitude for teaching the very doctrine that supplied the source from which mankind has derived so much! Filled with the spirit of their unshaken convictions, they endured all and sacrificed everything to defend their religion and faithfully to serve their God.

Thus they have been dispersed over the whole earth like some blessed seed, to bear testimony to God and to His great name. We ever willingly bring offerings to God for all His goodness, and herein should all mankind, as children of God, vie with one-another as His messengers on earth. This is the opinion and conviction, dearest Ellen,

Of your loving and sincere friend,

ESTHER.

## THIRD LETTER.

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### SALVATION THROUGH FAITH.

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*Frankfort a/M., August 5th, 1861.*

DEAR ELLEN,

You asked me in your answer to my last letter, a new and very important question. "As faith secures bliss," you say, "how can the Jews be indifferent about the salvation of their fellow creatures?" To that question you add the following remarks, which I will also repeat, to make my answer still clearer. You say that the hearts of all Christians are filled with compassion towards us. They lament our fate, and love alone induces them to try and convert us, in the hope that we too may be blessed. You also imply, that the thought that we shall not meet in Heaven, casts a shadow over the

brightness of our intimacy on earth. A friend's heart must indeed be most painfully affected by this thought. But, dear Ellen, are *we* not friends? I love you as deeply as if you were of my own faith, and yet the thought of converting you has never entered my mind. Surely real virtue and piety can alone gain us the love of our fellow creatures, and even of those who differ from us in faith. The earnest desire that Christians express to lead us in the way of salvation, has often been the pretext, not of loving actions, but of the greatest cruelty, and has given place to compulsory conversions and religious persecutions. Can your tender heart approve of such proceedings? Assuredly not; for the *means* should be as holy as the *end*. But man has often made use of evil to accomplish supposed good, and such conduct must displease the Almighty in the highest degree.

In this way Christians have often done harm to Faith and even to Love. Jews reason differently; they do not believe that in their faith lies the only means of salvation. Faith,

according to our views, does not mean the mere acceptance of certain religious truths; for it also signifies: A firm trust in God and a heartfelt, childlike dependence on His goodness.

We know the Eternal exists; we know it as confidently as that we exist ourselves. This, therefore, is not a belief, but a certainty, a knowledge founded on conviction. The comforting assurance that we have a heavenly Father, constantly watching over us, who loves us as only a father can love,—this belief or conviction we call “*EMUNA*,” faith and trust in God, and it is this faith that sanctifies and makes us truly “blessed.”

Yet, however sublime this feeling is, it is not sufficient for our salvation. An inward trust and devotion to God, in a word, what we call *faith*, is not by itself sufficient to make us holy. ‘Do what is right, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God,’ (Micah vi. 8). Thus says one of our great Prophets, and do you doubt, dear Ellen, that if we fulfil our duty to God

and man in our daily life, if we continually strive to avoid the wrong, to encourage what is right, if we correct our faults and sanctify our whole life, God will be merciful to us, and the gates of Heaven will be one day open to receive us ?

The Eternal judges us by our deeds ; we shall be punished or rewarded according to our actions. The sincere trust we have in God, the fervent worship we offer to Him, should increase our ardour to live agreeably to His laws. But faith alone cannot sanctify or bless us : it needs the accompaniment of holy works.

I know that Christians regard faith as a merit which is rewarded by eternal salvation. But faith, considered as the acceptance of religious truth, cannot be a merit ; for we are not forced to believe, nor does our mind require urging to accept the knowledge of the One God. All the truths of our precious religion lie openly and intelligibly before us. With us a pure knowledge of God is the main point,

but in addition to this, the Divine Law has established certain ordinances, which serve to fix our religion still more deeply in our mind and heart. In the knowledge of God, in Faith, and in our Trust in God there is indeed no Merit, nor can we expect to obtain through them alone any reward. They form in themselves our greatest blessing, and afford us boundless happiness, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Why should we be rewarded in Heaven for possessing a priceless jewel? Is there any *merit* in the tender relation of a father towards his child, in the blessed bond of love which unites parents and children? Does *their* care require a reward? Such are the feelings we should cherish towards God, our heavenly Father. How then can we expect or lay claim to thanks or a reward for a faith, a persuasion, without which we could not live? What is it that supports and consoles us in trouble, sustains us in sickness, gives us strength in our daily duties and labours, and upholds us bravely in the trials of life? Is it not our inward belief that the Eternal unchanging God sends these trials to make us more

pure and holy? This belief is certainly a gift of God and not man's merit.

Our acknowledgment that God is the Eternal and only One, does not allow us to make any distinction in our feelings towards others. It induces us to love all our fellow-creatures, of whatever religion they may be. Christians, especially, we love and esteem, for we know that it is God's will that through them the Heathen shall be led to the knowledge of God. If God commands us to love all mankind, even those who do not profess our faith, because they are His children, how much more certain should we be that God loves us all, to whatever faith and race we may belong?

How then can any Christians entertain the belief that we and all those who are not Christians must suffer eternal torments, and must be cut off from eternal salvation? Do we, on account of our creed, cease to be God's children? The allmerciful and just God sees into the hearts of man, and the difference of religious opinions can offer no barrier of

exclusion from His love,—no cause for inflicting eternal punishment and misery. God in His justice cannot condemn man because he remains true to the religion he has inherited from his parents; and if in this religion he “does what is right, and loves what is good,” then he must be acceptable, yea more acceptable than that man, who, perhaps, professes even a purer religion, but does not act up to its precepts.

Thus we find, even among the Heathen, elevating proofs of generosity and virtue, and a belief in a higher Being. Was Socrates,—the noblest of Greeks, to be eternally condemned because he was not a Christian? Impossible! According to his faith he fulfilled his duties in an exemplary and zealous manner, and God will surely reward him for the good he did, although he belonged to a heathen nation. We find in History many examples of this kind, and especially in the Bible. Job was an Arabian, not an Israelite; but can we think that God will exclude from everlasting bliss, him whom He called the most pious of men? Or can we

believe that Abraham is in heaven, while his friends Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre are in hell? Ah, dear Ellen, let us imitate Abraham. Let us consider all men as our brothers! Let us be grateful towards them, when they have shewn us even a small kindness; let us forget that they do not belong to our faith, and love them all equally, as we are all loved by the one Creator of heaven and earth! Yes, dear Ellen, I share with all the people of Israel one firm hope;—it is, that a time will come when all mankind shall form one family on earth, and that all who are worthy to appear before Him, shall be united before God in Heaven. It is said in our Talmud: “The pious of all nations will have a share in the future world.” Judaism is most precious, because it embraces so completely and so fervently all mankind, and excludes no one from God’s covenant nor from men’s communion, neither in heaven nor on earth.

And now, dear friend, I must end my long letter. I hope I have satisfied you on this one point, and that I may be able to do so on

many others. Do not be sparing of enquiries: I answer them willingly and gladly.

I conclude, in the hope of soon receiving one of your welcome letters, and remain, now and ever,

Your loving friend,

ESTHER.

## FOURTH LETTER.

---

### ORIGINAL SIN.

---

MY DEAR ELLEN,

Your last letter gave me much pleasure. I did not expect such a prompt answer, and I thank you sincerely for it.

You write that I erred in my last letter in the following manner (allow me to repeat your own words): You explain that the true faith of a Christian is a belief in the merit of the Saviour, who died for the sins of man. In this merit the faithful only have a share. Without this belief man would have remained under the curse of original sin, from which we mortals, steeped as we are in corruption, cannot free ourselves. Ah, dear Ellen, allow me to remark how sad that doctrine is which considers human nature to be thus depraved. How can we

work,—how can we improve ourselves, if we feel that our efforts and aspirations towards virtue and perfection are useless, because the fetters of an endless chain, that of original sin, hold us in bondage?

How can a new-born infant, reposing peacefully and innocently in the arms of its mother, have sinned? Is not the Almighty a God of love and universal goodness? Can He have laid such a ban on *all* men for the sin of *one*? God allowed him to atone for his sin; ought we all to be called upon to take part in his atonement? No! It appears to me that with this awful idea we could never go through the world joyously and freely; we could never fulfil our duty zealously. It would be too discouraging, and involuntarily we should say to ourselves: What is the result of all our endeavours to perfect our souls? They are but fruitless efforts; we are and shall always remain children of sin!

How many good and noble examples we find among those who are not Christians! There is

a truly religious authoress of my faith, whose works you have often admired. She devoted herself from her earliest youth to the service of her fellow creatures, and worked late and early in the hope of inspiring those who shared her faith with her own pious spirit, her self-sacrificing love, and her constant trust in God. She strove to awaken in the hearts of others her own fervent sentiments and to lead her fellow-creatures gradually nearer to God. Is it to be believed that such a noble pure soul should be abandoned by God and left a victim to original sin? Then, again, what models of pure heartedness and holy resignation our past history affords! What an example of heroism we possess in that mother, who endured so much, that, if the most trustworthy authorities did not testify to her extraordinary sufferings, we could scarcely credit them. She, who saw all her earthly possessions, all that a mother's heart holds dearest, her children, fall, one after another, by the tyrant's hand; fall, because they would not renounce their faith! And yet, as her sons expired before her eyes, whilst her heart bled with sorrow and anguish, this noble woman had

power to exhort her children to be courageous, and to gaze towards heaven, whence the eternal and all-merciful God could see their sufferings, and reward them in that land where pain and sorrow are unknown.

Ah, dear friend, was not this noble, great, and sublime? Can the Eternal punish those who achieve such deeds, who show such holy piety, because the first man sinned? This terrible thought is opposed to every conception of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator.

How short was Adam's happiness and his heavenly life in Paradise! Is it possible that the All-merciful allowed him to behold the bliss of Eden, in order to punish him and all those that came after him eternally? The greatest happiness for which we all wait hopefully on earth, is to exist in Paradise, after this life is over. We can not indeed attain that beatitude until we have sincerely repented of our sins, and perfected our work on earth to the best of our ability. But God, who does not leave the honest labourer unrewarded, would

not certainly allow us to endure so much, nor expose us to so many heavy trials, without vouchsafing at the end the reward of our zealous struggles. Could the Almighty have allowed primeval Paradise to exist for so short a time, in order to throw us now and for ever into eternal punishment and unbounded misery? I do not doubt that your kind heart, your clear understanding, will answer these questions correctly.

The sad doctrine of original sin appears to me as contrary to divine justice as to divine love. The Almighty revealed Himself to us through His sublime works, through His holy words, and everything speaks to us of His sublime justice; not only in *one*, but in every page of the Scriptures mention is made of God's justice. I will, therefore, direct your attention to some of the many examples which will, I think, appear to you clear and convincing. It is written in Genesis xviii. 25: "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far

from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

We find also in the 18th chapter of Genesis that Abraham prayed for sinners, and the All-merciful promised that if there were only ten righteous to be found in the city He would spare the whole city of Sodom! If then God would spare so many sinners for the sake of ten righteous, can we believe that He will condemn all future generations for the sin of *one*?

In the fifth Book of Moses it says distinctly : "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. xxiv. 16). This is the command of the Eternal Himself. Could He have spoken thus if hereditary sin ordained the contrary? Adam was our father, and we are his children! What sublime ideas the 18th chapter of Ezekiel contains! The heart of the Prophet embraces all mankind! The Eternal says to him: "Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: only the soul that sinneth shall die."

Ah, dear Ellen, you see the Eternal punishes those only who transgress, but spares the innocent.

God breathes into every human being a spirit pure and bright: woe to him who does not carefully guard this divine spark so as to return it in undiminished brightness to Him who gave it. The Mosaic doctrine does not acknowledge original sin. All nature is God's sanctuary; "The whole world is full of His holiness" (Isaiah vi. 3); and when man sins, then does he desecrate God's work. Man *can* sin, but he *need* not.

You allude in your last letter to another sentence in the Bible which refers to the sin of Adam. You must mean this verse in Isaiah. The Prophet certainly says here: "Thy first father has sinned" (Isaiah xliii. 27), but he does not say that we are therefore necessarily sinful. Unfortunately, much is added by man to what the Holy Scriptures reveal to us, and by these additions we lose a great deal of the truth and purity of the language of the

Bible, which is made to imply a meaning very different from that conveyed by the original text.

You will now surely ask: If the account of Adam's sin was to exercise no influence on mankind, why has God related it to us? I will answer this natural question very simply. The history of the first sin ought certainly to exercise an influence over mankind, but not in the sense imposed upon it by the doctrine of original sin.

The first sin should be a warning and a summons to us all. *A warning*, because God showed unto man what he should do and from what he should refrain, that he may escape from sin and its heavy consequences, after He had expelled Adam, on account of his sins, from Paradise. *A summons*, because God thus incited us, as the first Paradise was lost, to build a new one on earth by an assiduous God-fearing life of active piety, and thereby to sanctify and improve the world.

And each one *can* create a Paradise in him-

self. In our earliest years, in the innocence of our childhood, without knowledge and experience of the world, we are all in Paradise, and if we hearken to the voice of God, we can remain in this blissful state. But woe to us, if we listen to the serpent of temptation! Then we withdraw, like Adam, from Paradise, and turn our backs on it with the most bitter feelings. We then immediately descend towards death; for what is sin but a living death on earth? But as for virtue: "On its path is life!" It raises us above everything, even above death; for it guides us to a future life, and even on earth our good deeds flourish and bear rich blessings. "On their path is no death!" But if man has transgressed—and, alas! how few of us are free from sin!—our divine doctrine does not let him despair; he can reconcile himself again with God.

When a good child has offended his parents and disobeyed them, he cannot rest until he has begged for pardon, and has been forgiven by them. Judaism teaches us to behave with equal simplicity and humility towards our heavenly

Father ; and if we have erred in neglecting our duties to God or to our fellow-creatures, we should, when we are alone, throw ourselves on our knees, and in deep humility lay bare our sorrowful and repentant hearts before Him, and, openly, without the mediation of a third person, sue for pardon from our heavenly Father, as we did when children from our earthly parents. In this manner should we prove that we always remain children. “Ye are children of the Eternal your God” (Deut. xiv. 1); and whilst we act thus we shall preserve our Paradise in a continual childhood and remain near unto our heavenly Father.

I am now, dear friend, approaching an important subject,—the doctrine of atonement, which is manifested to us in our holy Day of Atonement, and as my letter has already become too long, I will, with your permission, continue my remarks on this subject in my next. I will, therefore, conclude for to-day, but not before I have assured you how tenderly you are loved by your true friend,

ESTHER.

## FIFTH LETTER.

---

### THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

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*Frankfort a/M., October 18th, 1861.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I delayed finishing the important subject which I treated in my last, so as to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion in a second letter.

I mentioned the doctrine of atonement, and was thus led to discuss the signification of our Day of Atonement. I spoke of man's reconciliation with God, which Judaism does not recognise without a previous reconciliation with man. How could we dare to ask forgiveness if we were disunited among ourselves and were living in discord with our neighbour? To effect reconciliation, God has given us the Day of

Atonement,—a day of perfect peace, which we should devote entirely to our heavenly Father, after we ourselves have subdued our sinful nature, have reconciled ourselves with our fellow-creatures, and turned away with a strong will from the evil course that has separated us from God.

The Prophet Isaiah has said: “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear ” (Isaiah lix. 2).

We Israelites do not recognise the doctrine of original sin, but we are, nevertheless, fully aware of the weakness and deficiency of our human nature. Oh, how often are we creatures so enveloped and so surrounded by sin, that we can no longer gaze on the face of the Eternal! His kindness and His compassion are then withdrawn from us, and the saddest barrier divides us from our God. We, therefore, feel the necessity of atonement, to efface our sins and to enable us once more to enjoy the light of the divine countenance.

We do not, however, believe that this atonement should or could be accomplished by the intervention of a third person or mediator. We ourselves must strive for it. God then helps us and comes mercifully towards the penitent. For this purpose He has given us the Day of Atonement. Our religion desires no other penance; it is not necessary to impose hard privations on ourselves in order to be acceptable unto God. Thus it is clear that on this one great day we cannot sacrifice ourselves entirely to God, if we do not free ourselves from every earthly thought; and for this reason the Eternal has ordered us to fast one day in the year, and thereby to afflict the body and elevate the soul.

This one day we are to spend entirely in prayer, as the High Priest did (Lev. xvi. 17), in order that we may implore mercy and forgiveness for ourselves, our family, and our fellow-creatures. On this day we should prostrate ourselves before the Lord of lords in His holy temple, that we may humble ourselves, repent, acknowledge our faults, and expiate and atone for our manifold transgressions. Thus

should this day teach us a doctrine entirely opposed to that of original sin, which declares man to be thoroughly depraved and incapable of wresting himself from the grasp of sin. The Day of Atonement tells us, that, if we earnestly wish it, we can elevate ourselves and conquer our sinful natures, and restore God's dominion over our hearts.

How great is our debt of gratitude to the Most High, who has graciously given us this Day of days! You know, dear friend, that we Israelites commence the religious year in the autumn, about September, whereas we begin the common civil year in January, like all the world. I cannot give you a detailed explanation in this letter of this regulation, but if you will kindly allow it, I will, in another letter, name our Festivals to you and try to explain their high significance.\*

At that important period, when the fruits of the past season are gathered in and fresh seeds sown for a new year, we solemnly inaugurate the religious year with a holy day,

\* These letters were, alas, never written,—Ed.

and our Day of Atonement follows ten days afterwards. The Almighty, in His wisdom, gave us this holiest of days in the harvest time, that we might review the fruits of the soul during the past year, sow new seeds of goodness, love and faith, and thus avoid carrying into the coming year the seeds of sin.

As God allows the fruits of the fields to grow for all His creatures, so does He distribute His mercy and forgiveness over all mankind. He is the Father and Saviour of all men, of Jews as well as Gentiles. The Christian doctrine of salvation excludes from atonement all those who do not subscribe to a particular creed. Some believe and even openly declare that all other souls are lost and will never see Paradise ; others, somewhat milder in their views, assert that our sins cannot be forgiven on earth ; but they are silent as regards heaven, and do not venture to put themselves in the place of the Almighty, and declare that He has cast us away for ever.

Ah, dear Ellen, compare with these senti-

ments our doctrine of atonement. Is it not more beautiful, more humane? It embraces the whole human species. We believe firmly and earnestly, that as God forgives the sins of Israelites, so will He forgive the sins of our fellow-creatures, if they fervently implore His pardon. In the solemn service for the Day of Atonement we say: "And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them, seeing all the people were in ignorance" (Numb. xv. 26). The merciful God will not admit that any of His children can have sinned against Him from mere stubbornness. He mercifully attributes their failings to ignorance, to error, and therefore He forgives all with a father's love and indulgence. The word "*stranger*" implies only a "non-Israelite." We Israelites were for a long time treated by other nations with more harshness and cruelty than any other race. God's holy law, therefore, commands us to return good for evil towards those who have treated us harshly, and thus verify our idea of that atonement which God grants to mankind.

In conclusion, dear friend, I have to answer another objection you raised in your last letter. You say that if "Original Sin" were not the portion of all mankind, why should the punishment, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis iii. 19), be felt as a curse by all men unto this day? It is true that we feel this effect, but surely, what was a punishment to Adam, may become a blessing to ourselves. What is there in the world more praiseworthy than work? Does it not keep us from sin, and give us the pleasure of accomplishing good deeds? For some it is, of course, heavier and more bitter than for others; but the heavier it is, the happier do we feel when after much trouble, we have completed it and can be satisfied with ourselves. The best work and, certainly, the most difficult is the improvement of our souls. This work we have all to accomplish; but this work is precisely that which gives us the highest and brightest of all blessings,—that which is accompanied by inward peace and heavenly repose.

And *we* especially, Eve's daughters, must

strive, through patience, mildness, meekness, and self-government, to improve our souls. Then shall we make amends for the faults of our first mother, and encircle our domestic life with a paradise of peace and love. In this way will we two endeavour, faithfully and joyfully, to fulfil our duties; we will devote our existence to God, striving to live *for* Him and *in* Him; we will vie with each other in love, you as a good Christian, and I as a good Israelite; and in later years we will compare our respective paths and we may discover, with God's help, that they have both been good roads, and have helped to conduct us to a blessed immortality.

May we meet soon again, my much beloved friend. I include in my most earnest prayers a fond wish for your welfare, and remain ever your faithful companion in the path of life and duty,

ESTHER.

## SIXTH LETTER.

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### DOCTRINE OF THE MESSIAH.

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*Frankfort a/M., January 30th, 1862.*

DEAREST ELLEN,

I have hitherto delayed writing, as I wished, after mature reflection, to be enabled to give you a clear answer to the subject you placed before me, in your last letter. May I succeed in doing this to your satisfaction!

You are curious to know what is the Jewish conception of the Messiah, and whether it does not regard him as the redeemer from inborn sin.

This question opens an important, perhaps the most important, subject of difference that exists between Christianity and Judaism.

The very name of Christianity, as you are doubtless aware, signifies the Religion of the Messiah, and Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Maschiach, Messiah (Saviour). In Christianity the person of the Messiah, the Saviour, Redeemer, or Mediator, may be considered the principal object. He is the axis on which the whole system revolves, the supporter that upholds the entire fabric of the religion. Without this personification of the Messiah, Christianity would lose its peculiar character, and the whole edifice would fall. The *beginning* of Christianity is the first appearance of the Messiah, the *end* of it is the hope of his re-appearance.

The whole life of a Christian, all his thoughts and aspirations are not more hopefully and trustingly directed towards God Himself than towards the Messiah, who in a limited sense is styled Lord.

Not so in Judaism ; with us, God, the only One, is an indivisible unity, and between Him and us we must not accept a mediator. He is

All in all. Thus with us the personification of the Messiah remains almost entirely in the background. The chief point in our Messianic doctrine is the *Future* that we expect, not the man that is to bring it; with us the Messiah is the “finishing stone,” not the foundation of the building. The world will not be perfected *through* him, but when it is perfected, God will send him to establish the work of union. For this all nations must prepare themselves, and this is the aim of Israel’s mission. It is true that the Almighty punished our ancestors on account of their sins; they were obliged to wander about the earth lonely and scattered, hated and pursued. But God, in His goodness and justice, had a wise and loving purpose in this punishment. He wished to purify us by trials, to give to all mankind, by our firm adherence to our faith, the opportunity of beholding an example of fidelity and religious steadfastness, and thus to make known the doctrine of God’s unity to the whole world. And, when our transgressions shall have been expiated and our great task is fulfilled; when, by our pure doctrine, mankind shall have be-

come united as one family through faith in *one* God; *then*, and not till *then*, will the Kingdom of God be proclaimed and the Messiah appear. But, redemption from sin is, and ever will be, in the power of the sole God. The Messiah will unite mankind, and proclaim those great words which dwell in every heart, “*united in God.*”

Our Messiah, or rather this blissful Time of his coming will certainly arrive as soon as the Almighty deems us fit for it—when all religions are purified, and all mankind accepts the one pure doctrine of the existence of the eternal Almighty Deity. We cannot know whom God will choose to establish the divine empire on earth, and this is of no great importance to us; for our hopes and aspirations belong to the *time* and not to the *man*. But you say, dear friend, in your letter, that we cannot fail to acknowledge that the Bible contains prophetic announcements of the coming of a being who should suffer on earth for the sins of others, as the suffering Messiah did. You consider that several passages in the Bible refer to the per-

sonal Messiah, and that these passages apply to the sufferings of Christ, and speak to us of him as the bearer of blessings, as the Saviour who was to redeem us from the bondage of our original sin. You point out, in particular, the 53th chapter of Isaiah. Forgive me, dear friend, if I tell you that you are herein mistaken. The Scriptures, indeed, often allude to a man of sorrow, who would have to endure heavy burdens for the salvation of the world ; but this man only typifies the people of Israel. The whole book of the great Prophet Isaiah, and especially the last part from the 40th chapter, treats of the “Servant of God” and the “Servant Israel,” and of his sufferings, in very impressive, remarkable, and sometimes sad and exalted terms. Allow me to quote and explain a very important passage from the 53rd chapter : “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” Just as in the previous chapter (52nd) the Prophet speaks of and promises the salvation of Israel in these words : “And the Lord hath made bare His

holy arm in the eyes of all the nations ” (lii. 10). So in the above passage from the 53rd chapter, he expressly alludes to Israel, and introduces distinctly other nations. How was Israel treated after following God’s commands, and proclaiming the doctrine of the eternal unity of God, which is man’s salvation and blessing? How was he rewarded? By outrage, by persecution, by mockery and insult. Such was the reward, such were the thanks Israel received from other nations. They looked on us as “the punished, the beaten race,” and they therefore thought it would be a good work to trample on us and to reject us for ever. But God did not cast us off! On the contrary, He shewed us how much he loved us; for He bestowed on us in our dispersion our highest mission? He imposed on us a great and sacred task—the task of preserving, among the nations and for the nations, our holy and divine doctrine, for the salvation of all and for the future reconciliation of mankind with God? But the nations transgressed and sinned in rejecting and persecuting us, for they would not believe that we were still God’s priests,

sent by Him to be His messengers to man. Thus were we *wounded* through their errors, *rejected* through their cruel treatment. We preserved in its purity that which should effect the salvation of the world, the expiatory doctrine of the One Father in heaven; we suffered, in order that through our wounds and through our wrongs all the nations of the earth might be saved; for sufferings have actually contributed to strengthen Israel's faith, and to fortify us in our mission of universal enlightenment. A day will come when all people will see this. They will then acknowledge that we are sent by the Almighty and are beloved by Him; then the hatred of man will be changed into love, his ignorance will give way to knowledge, his curses will become blessings. "Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee" (Isaiah xlii. 13, 14). In that day we shall be regarded as a blessing to the whole human race, because we shall have led mankind to God, the universal Father.

Then, dear friend, when this great work of

union is achieved, then, indeed, will man be happy. The earth will be a glorious garden, where the tree of suffering, moistened by tears, shall blossom in full brightness and bear the fruits of happiness and joy. Then every human heart will be filled with bliss; the whole world will be one home, the whole of mankind will form one family, and the primeval Paradise will again be restored to earth. Then a universal peace will reign, hatred for religion's sake will no longer exist. The eternal, immutable, loving and merciful God will bless all His children in the same way. The tears of the oppressed will cease to flow, the sighs of the persecuted will no longer be heard; the humble will feel themselves raised up, the rich will bow themselves before God. Then will the wounded heart be healed, the unfortunate consoled, the unhappy cheered, the wicked reformed. Hatred, injustice, and haughtiness will disappear, for the Kingdom of God will be founded on justice, on truth and eternal peace. Then will Israel exclaim, "Our prayer is heard, God has rescued us." All mankind will ascend the mount of Zion, and from thence will God bless all the people of the earth.

Oh, that this heavenly day of peace were already here! Would that all mankind were already sanctified and penetrated by the knowledge of God, blessed and inspired by the love of our heavenly Father! How earnestly do I beseech God to endow man with a humble and pure spirit that he may learn all things in truth. How zealously do I beseech Him to establish soon and for ever His glorious reign among us. But to achieve this, we must *all*, all of us, both small and great, poor and rich, work together. For every God-fearing man is already an inhabitant, a citizen of the divine Kingdom, a participator in its blessings. How shall we be able to claim our share, if we have not worked zealously for the improvement of our own souls, not only of those who share our faith, but of all our fellow-creatures? Even as Adam and Eve were obliged to withdraw from Paradise, because they had not obeyed what the Eternal commanded them, so, too, should we be unable to possess or to lay claim to the kingdom of God, if we had not fulfilled our duties and carried out our own task faithfully. Therefore, let us, dear friend, strive to the best

of our power, to assist in establishing the Messianic reign, by forming in our circles a small divine kingdom, in which love and faith and true religion shall hold empire. May mankind find itself improved in every family, until at last all mankind shall appear as one single and noble family. The realization of this idea is the Messianic age, on which we fix our hope. May we live to see its advent, and through our conduct help to hasten its appearance! I pray from my heart that the Almighty may strengthen you further in your good and noble purposes and sanctify your whole life; and that, when you pray for the improvement of the human soul, you may include in your prayers,

Your truly loving friend,

ESTHER IZATES.

## SEVENTH LETTER.

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“ISRAEL THE CHOSEN.”

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*Frankfort a/M., April 13th, 1864.*

DEAR FRIEND,

Our correspondence has been long interrupted, but, with your permission, I will now resume it where it was broken off.

I was rejoiced to hear that you found the contents of my last letter so clear and convincing, and that you agree, as far as your belief will allow, with my view of the doctrine of the Messiah, or rather of the Messianic epoch.

But when, in accordance with the language of the Bible, I speak of the Jews as “God’s servant,” you are led to ask me what we

Israelites actually mean by these words, or rather what we conceive their real signification to imply. The followers of Christianity, you say, accuse us of being proud of the title of "*A Chosen People*," and of despising, on that account, other nations.

My dear friend! If Israel were proud (I mean in the low sense of the word, for there is a noble pride, a self-respect that all men should possess), then the word *Servant* would not certainly be so frequently employed in all the books of the Prophets, to express the relation in which we stand to God. A servant is not a proud master, and no other expression is so applicable to Israel; for, when it was used, we were the only people who worshipped God. But the spirit of God came over the Prophets, and they predicted much that would happen to the children of Israel, not only at that time, but in the future, for they cast an enlightened glance into the time to come, and saw only too well that we should one day become the "*servant of man*." Throughout that holy time when the Prophets spoke in God's name to Israel, they

taught us to be the “*servants of God*,” that is, to devote ourselves to His service and to worship and pray to Him alone.

To be the “*servant*” of the Eternal was an honour, a benefit, even when we were an independent, free nation. But God knew that the time would come when we should be subservient to other nations, and that the servant of God would become the servant of man. He wished, therefore, to strengthen our faith, so that we might look to Him in our troubled future, and that we might find the painful bonds of man rendered bearable by the remembrance that we were still serving the true God. We are not, therefore, proud, nor can we be accused of appearing so, for the word is not compatible with our subordinate condition. Grateful, glad and happy we are that God has chosen us; but no pride, no haughtiness is mingled with our pious feelings.

I know, dear Ellen, that as you love the Bible and read it diligently, you must be aware that the Prophets often use the expression :

“Israel is as a lamb when it is shorn or led to the slaughter ;” and a lamb is surely a meek animal. But if even we ever had been proud, our many troubles would have freed us from this fault. With what lamblike patience have we borne for centuries the insults and mockery of the world? These mortifications we have met with that worthy pride which maintains a dignified silence in grief. We have borne all in God’s holy name, without murmuring, without struggling, satisfied with the reflection that it was the will of the Almighty, and that from Him the nations would receive their correction; for God has said: “To Me belongeth vengeance and recompence” (Deut. xxxii. 35). We, therefore, had no choice but to wait patiently. We have done so, and our dignity is thereby established. A noble pride is not troubled by the wickedness of the world. That God would provide for us and deliver us in His good time, was the consoling thought of our pious ancestors. If the whole of mankind had not oppressed and insulted our forefathers, they would have esteemed their fellow-creatures more, and would have been able to value them

more highly. For we are but human : we cannot help feeling wrongs and injustice ; and although we forgave our enemies, the remembrance of offences received must involuntarily have influenced the love it was our duty to exhibit towards those who oppressed us. In general, however, we loved the world more than the world loved us, although recompense was due to us for the many wrongs which we had innocently suffered.

Dear friend, believe me ! We bear the name of “ God’s Servant ” with meekness, although the feeling that we stand in the Eternal’s service greatly elevates us. We received with humility the preference which God granted to our fathers over other nations. A dignified, independent pride fills our heart when we remember the great name which the Eternal has bestowed on us.

How can the followers of Christianity assert that we despise other nations ? To do so would be to act in direct opposition to the will of the Eternal, and not to fulfil the one particular

duty imposed on us. For the Almighty not only called us "*His Servant*;" He gave us also the name of "*His Firstborn*." We feel the whole importance of the meaning of this word; we know the great sum of duties it involves. Yes, dearest Ellen, God showed His great preference in this one word, but with it He bestowed on us vast and sacred duties.

The "Firstborn" in a family has the office of helping to educate the younger brothers and sisters; he must often replace parents and teachers; he must lead them right when they err, or encourage them to persevere in the good path if they have chosen it,—in a word, he himself must be virtuous and pious, so that he may afford a good example to the others. If he has the preference and the honour of being first by rank of birth, it naturally follows that he should also be the first in virtue and piety, in goodness and gentleness. The former preference is *unmerited*; the latter may be deserved and obtained. This is the duty of the firstborn; this is our duty! Are we not

members of one family — children of the Heavenly Father? Israel is the firstborn of all the families of the earth—of all God's children! The Lord has imposed on us this great duty,—to stand out prominently before the eyes of all, as an example worthy of being imitated,—to be pious, virtuous, God-fearing and holy. I will not assert that we are so in reality. I only say that our mission requires us to be so. Unfortunately, we are not free from the imperfections of other men; but since God has given us so great a preference, it behoves us to perform and acquit ourselves of our exalted task in an exemplary manner. To fulfil the duties of the “firstborn” we must spread religious knowledge. Divine providence has determined that through us mankind should obtain a pure and intelligible doctrine of the One God. We should, therefore, step forward and hold before the people that banner, on which is written, “God is One, and His Name is One.” Other nations follow us even now; but a day will come when they will follow us still further, “and will reach the mountain from which the doctrine of the One

God streams forth " where all mankind will be united.

When the Author of all things brought forth the world, He created *one* man only; and here, even, we have a distinct example of the beautiful doctrine of Unity. Men have become disunited by following different gods; but the time will come when we shall again be as God originally created us; and just as Adam was alone and one, so shall we be one in spirit: we shall form one Great Family on Earth, and possess one Father in Heaven.

This promise shows itself in the covenant which God established with Noah. For when He set His glorious Rainbow in the Heavens, He promised peace and eternal union to all nations of the whole earth.

But the notion of Unity shows itself most in the covenant with Abraham. In him, our ancestor, "He blessed all nations of the earth," He promised that they should constitute one family in God. This is the clearest proof of

the truth of Monotheism; for we could not become united as one family if we had various religions and different gods.

Yes, we are the "*Firstborn*" of God; and, therefore, the "*Firstborn*" of all nations. How distinctly has the Eternal pointed out to Moses, "*Israel is my Firstborn Son*" (Exodus iv. 22.) If one speaks of a *Firstborn*, it is naturally understood that there must be other children; otherwise God would only have said "*my Son*." The Almighty has many children, many sons, and of all these, Israel is the "*Firstborn*."

Does not a father love all his children with the same love? Does he prize the youngest less than the eldest? Certainly not! His fatherly love embraces them all with equal fervour. Thus it is with God. The whole of humanity is precious to Him. He loves us all equally; for are we not all His children? But, nevertheless, of these children Israel *is*, and remains the "*Firstborn*." As I have remarked above, a great duty is thus thrown upon us, for the very reason that we are named the

“Firstborn.” The Eternal does not, however, on this account, cherish us more than His other children. We may even suppose that He watches over the course of our life with still greater severity, for He wishes to see if we fulfil our task faithfully. But we may also suppose that He takes more interest in us, and is not this quite natural? Have we not been for long neglected by man? and does not a father betake himself most lovingly to the child who is insulted and rejected by others? God in his compassion, cherishes most lovingly the forsaken one.

I again return to that title of “*Firstborn*,” of which no one can hope or venture to deprive us, because I have forgotten to mention one point. God says thus: “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus xix. 6.) Both by deed and by word we should be holy, so that we may appear as priests to mankind, and serve as an example to them; for otherwise we should not fully carry into effect the meaning of the phrase “*Kingdom of Priests*.”

In the first ages God revealed Himself to *us*, and, throughout all time, we shall stand upon the earth as the People of the Revelation and the witness of God.

We are a living proof of the Divine Revelation, and by holy precepts and example we should propagate this Revelation, and by the sanctity of our own life become known to the world as true priests. We are to be patterns of virtue and piety, but we do not the less believe that the virtues of other nations are precious in God's sight. All goodness, wherever it may be found, is pleasing to the Almighty, and we can discover real virtue in every land and in all creeds. What a great error it is to suppose that the Eternal prizes the goodness of one man, on account of his faith, more than that of another. Is not God the original source of all goodness? If He found good in one nation only, and delighted in the noble works of those only who followed one particular belief, would this not be unjust in the highest degree? And dare we associate such a word, as injustice, with the Eternal—the Holy One? Impossible! Of that there can be no doubt.

I can give you, moreover, a convincing proof of this from the Bible, in the touching history of Job. He was, as I have already remarked in a previous letter, an Arabian, not an Israelite, and God called him, "the most pious of all men." Is that not the most speaking proof of the justice of the Eternal, who does not acknowledge any distinction of person nor any distinction of creed, or belief? God looks only to the heart and judges thereby, without regard to birth or religion.

Instead of reproaching us with being "*The Chosen*," all men therefore should hail this name with gratitude.

Through Abraham, our great ancestor, the Almighty blessed the world, and through us alone is the foundation established for the great union that will eventually bring all mankind into the great family, adoring one Father—God, the All Merciful, and clinging to *one* home—*Palestine*. The whole earth will then be God's great Kingdom, and all mankind, spread over the entire earth, will be one nation.

“And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day” (Zech. ii. 11). That Day means that future when it shall please God to unite all nations as brethren. And in the book of the greatest Prophet after Moses, God says: “Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” (Isaiah xix. 25). Here God clearly makes known that all people are His children, yea, He even calls the Egyptians His people—those who in former ages showed themselves least holy before God. Nevertheless, *we* remain the “first-born of God;” He calls us here “His *Inheritance*,” which means “*His first possession*,” “*His first-born*.” God never forgets this; and man should also think of it with continued gratitude.

I hope now, dear Ellen, to have made this subject as clear as possible, and to have explained to you what is a common source of error, and to have proved to you that we are the eldest, but not the most beloved of God’s children. If I have succeeded in this, we are already doubly sisters, united by the junction

of heart and soul thus lovingly entwined, and also by the sympathy of enlightened religious views.

Let us therefore grasp each other's hands, and may we at the same time feel that our souls too are united by a firm and everlasting bond of love.

This is the heartfelt entreaty of

Your loving

ESTHER IZATES.

## EIGHTH LETTER.

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LOVE AND JUSTICE IN JUDAISM.

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*Frankfort a/M., November 5th, 1864.*

BELOVED ELLEN,

Many heartfelt thanks for your welcome and long-desired letter. Mine was not worthy of the praise you bestowed on it. But I must scold you a little, my friend. Why did the words, wherewith I concluded my last letter, surprise you so much? If you are convinced of my love and friendship, those words ought not to have surprised you; you should have anticipated them as the natural consequence of our intimate relation. When the heart is too full, it must overflow, and our deepest feelings find vent in expressions, and we thereby obtain relief. You should have known that I *felt*

those sentiments before I gave vent to them in words, for love ought to read the heart, and to penetrate and divine the most hidden things. Our friendship seems to me all the firmer and more unchangeable, because it is built on a strong and immoveable rock,—the exalted Rock of Religion. Here it has founded its altar, from which we feel ourselves borne on angels' wings upwards towards heaven.

Is it possible that you ever entertained of me the erroneous idea that Christians often possess with respect to members of our religion, namely, that Judaism comprises little or no love in its principles? Have you therefore supposed that *I* could not understand pure, disinterested, universal, all comprising love? If so, I rejoice, and the more so, because my last letter must have convinced you of the contrary, and have shown you that I, as a Jewess, feel and can reciprocate that sentiment most warmly. Is it not true that you do not realise the fact that love penetrates and surrounds the holy religion of my fathers with rays like a glorious halo? Let me lift up the thick veil which envelopes

our faith in sadness and obscures its beauties, so that it may stand out all the more faultless and glorious, freed from the disfiguring blemishes that injustice has attributed to it.

You say that you thought Love first entered the world with Christianity, but that Judaism was a religion of justice, and the Eternal our God was a severe God, who exercised judgment without love. What a mistake you have made ! Our God is love itself, the source of all love ; His conduct towards us is animated by the most fervent love, and we should, therefore, exhibit towards Him a heartfelt devotion.

But, in order to love God truly, our hearts must be filled with the thought that His only aim is to improve and perfect us, whilst we exist on earth. If we are convinced of this, we shall feel an irresistible longing to improve our knowledge of Him who has created all the abundant goodness that surrounds us.

When the Eternal reads this wish in our hearts, He never suffers us to wait long for

Him. The spirit of God comes over us, an unlimited resignation and a soothing peace sanctify our souls; and such peace and such tranquillity of soul are proofs of God's approach to us. Then, our whole heart is opened, and feels itself blessed by the presence of our beneficent Creator. In the endeavour to draw near to God, and in God's gracious approach towards us, consists the mutual, fervent relation between us and our Heavenly Father. The tender, childlike feeling that we entertain towards God gives us trust in Him, and we feel ourselves secure under His paternal shelter; we place our whole life in His almighty hand, convinced that He will guide us with wisdom and kindness. Out of this faith arises prayer,—the most holy bond between man and God. Could prayer exercise its beneficial influence, if we regarded God as a severe master? Do we ever ask a boon from an earthly being, of whose implacable severity we are certain? Never! We should not offer, therefore, our prayers confidingly to the Eternal, if we did not know, from the filial love we bear towards Him, that they will be listened to with fatherly affection.

We are created in God's image, and we ought continually to endeavour to resemble Him more and more. The most holy course of life would not suffice to make us, in the least degree, equal to our Divine Model. But the Almighty embraces everything with His deep love; and in this respect may we venture, in some small degree, to follow His heavenly example, whilst we give to Him our whole heart's devotion.

Our love of God is inseparably associated with the love we exhibit towards our neighbour; for we should extend to our fellow-creatures the heartfelt and devoted sentiments that we feel towards God. The all-loving Deity embraces the whole of humanity; He knows all, and nothing escapes His watchful eye. His omniscience is far beyond our power, for we can bring ourselves into connection with a very small portion only of mankind. Yet we can draw near to the standard of Divine love; and as God extends His tenderness to the furthest limits, so let us open *our* hearts to our fellow-creatures, and enlarge the circle of our sym-

pathies, that we may admit into our love all mankind, without distinction of creed, position, or race.

The word "*neighbour*" means not only a friend or relative, but also the stranger, who, standing apart from us in life, is drawn nearer and nearer by the bond of love, and thus becomes our *neighbour*.

It is but natural that we should love our friends, and those who are united to us by the ties of blood. Sentiments so congenial to our nature, could not be imposed on us as a duty, nor enjoined in the Bible as a special ordinance. The natural love that exists between parents and children, between wives and husbands, and brothers and sisters, is nowhere in the Scriptures ordained by law. This in itself is a speaking proof that the love which is *commanded*, concerns those only whose relation towards us is of a remote degree.

I think, dear friend, that you will be interested in the following little anecdote,

which will show you how, even in ancient times, the importance of love was acknowledged and honoured in our religion.

Hillel, one of our greatest philosophers, who lived about fifty years before the birth of Christ, was visited one day by a heathen, who wished to learn without much trouble the whole of the Mosaic Law. He, therefore, jokingly asked the sage if he could impart to him the whole of our Doctrine whilst he was standing on one foot. "Oh yes, my son," answered the gentle Hillel, "that is quite possible, for the whole of our religion is comprised in the one verse: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' All the rest," continued the sage, "is but the explanation of this text. Go thy way and study!" (Talmud, Tract. "Sabbath," 31a.)

Would that this golden rule had always been observed! Then religious warfare and persecutions would never have existed, and mankind would now be dwelling in greater peace and harmony.

I must confess that I am unable to understand how Christians can reproach Judaism with a want of love. They support this accusation with the following verse from the New Testament: "You have heard that it is said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy" (Matthew, v. 43.) But we naturally ask, where is this said? for it certainly cannot be found in our Scriptures, in which God has, by the mouth of Moses, pronounced the beautiful maxim of universal charity: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." I have already shown that the expression "*neighbour*," includes all men, even enemies. You should not, therefore, be astonished if the sentence I have quoted from the New Testament, fills us with indignation, as it rests on an entirely false assertion. Our Scriptures contain manifold decrees that prove the contrary, and expressly command us to show kindness to our enemy, to clothe him, to maintain him, and to return good for evil. I can quite understand that the non-Israelite should consider our religion rigorous and deficient in love; for it would indeed be so if, as Matthew insinuates,

this verse existed in the Books of Moses. How can we sufficiently thank God that this is not the case, and that numerous expressions testify to the fulness of love, which the Mosaic Law breathes forth and enjoins on those who follow it?

The much attacked Talmud contains many ingenious anecdotes; one of which I will here relate, to give you a further proof of the tenderness that Hebrew affection can elicit:—

Rabbi Meir, a teacher of the Talmud, was one day praying fervently to God that He might bless the good, when he allowed himself to be carried away by his zeal (for there are zealots in every religion), and also prayed to God to annihilate sinners, amongst whom he particularly remembered two wicked and hostile neighbours. His good wife, Beruria, overheard this prayer, and represented to him that he was too harsh. “Pray to God,” she added, “to annihilate *sin*, but not the *sinner*s. May they live and, by God’s help, turn from their wicked ways!” The pious Rabbi did as

his wife said, when his prayer was heard, and the wicked neighbours reformed, and became his friends. Is not the lesson taught by this admirable wife, sublime? If Beruria had professed a religion that commanded her to hate her enemies, would she have set up this principle—would she have offered up this prayer, not only on behalf of sinners in general, but likewise of individual sinners, and of her own personal enemies in particular? Surely not.

One of the most excellent commandments that God repeatedly inculcated on the children of Israel, was to love the stranger. We should not allow him to feel his forsaken position, but we should suffer him to live among us as a friend, to participate in the enjoyment of our pleasures and benevolence; we should help him in need and protect him from evil; in a word: “Love him as ourselves” (Lev. xix. 34), *i. e.*, we should love him as a man and as a brother, and always treat him as we should wish to be treated, were we in his place.

With *love*, is intimately associated *charity*.

As we open our hearts joyfully to everyone, so should we willingly offer our earthly goods to the poor and needy, and we should be charitable not only in *what* we give, but in our *manner* of giving. A gentle speech and a kind reception often effect more good than much money. We should, therefore, never be sparing of loving gifts and words, for in these our *real* riches are manifested—the riches of the heart. “Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because for this thing, the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou puttest thine hand to” (Deut. xv. 10). Moses tells us, we ought never in our hearts to feel harshly towards the recipients of benefits, even if they be our enemies.—“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again” (Exodus xxiii. 4). These are commandments of real charity; for we are not by nature inclined to render service to a person whom we dislike. It will probably cost us even a great effort of self-command to do so. God never says “*Hate thine enemy.*” Yet, these words are attributed to the Mosaic

Code. To suppose that such a precept should emanate from our Heavenly Father, is unnatural in the extreme, and we cannot therefore expect to find it inserted in a code which is acknowledged, by Christians as well as ourselves, to proceed from God. He commands us, on the contrary, to do good to our enemies; and, thus enjoined by the Eternal, let us not hesitate for a moment to render unto them the service of love, according to His holy will!

So many similar commandments, enforcing charity and generosity, present themselves to my mind, that I am embarrassed which to select for quotation. You have only to read the Pentateuch, in order to find for yourself these manifold examples. But let me quote from this Code of true human love one law regarding those persons who do not belong to the people of Israel.

After the Eternal had commanded, in His Law, that the non-Israelitish "*stranger*" should share our full affection, He ordains that the *servant*, even though coming from a strange

nation, should be treated with gentle kindness. Thus, in all enactments, to what class or persons soever they may refer, "*man-servants*" and "*maid-servants*" are included. *Our* rights are *their* rights, *our* joys are *their* joys, and this applies to non-Israelites as well as to Israelites.

"Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast; thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are within thy gates" (Deut. xvi. 14). No rejoicing, no festival should take place without everyone participating in it; not separately, but at the same time and in the same place with the master of the house. Remark also that no class of the lonely and forsaken is left unnoticed. The *widow* and the *fatherless*, whom no one adopts, the *Levite* and *stranger*, who possess no home, shall be remembered in festivity. This is certainly a clear proof of the charity that is earnestly and liberally practised in Israel, and animated by the purest spirit of universal love.

Not only to man, not only to our equals, not only to our servants, should we behave with love and goodness, but God commands us to treat the brute creation with gentleness and forbearance. We should not, indeed, lavish on them, as some do, too much tenderness, to the detriment of our love towards our fellow creatures, but we ought never to forget that they also are created by the Almighty, that they were formed by His beneficent hand, and that what comes from Him should never be regarded by us as worthless ; whatever has been formed by our Heavenly Father is worthy of *our* care.

We should not torment animals nor refuse unto them what is their due. “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deut. xxv. 4). All animals should have a certain time for repose, and ought to be allowed to rest one day in the week. “Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest” (Exodus xxiii. 12). To prevent two animals of different strength from working together,

the weaker of whom would thereby be compelled to labour beyond its strength, God has given us this merciful command: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. xxii. 10).

Even the beautiful products of the vegetable kingdom—that portion of God's rich creation which is not endowed with feeling, we ought to cherish, and take care that we do not wantonly destroy even a single leaf. How often we see frivolous people wander through a garden, plucking here and there the flowers from their stems and tossing them carelessly on the earth, to fade and wither! Ah! if they had but reflected on the lovely work that they were destroying, they would not have lifted their hands to do such harm. Flowers are the most beautiful products of nature, and they only require a soul to make them perfect. Who knows whether the calyx and its sweet fragrance, the corolla and its beautiful colours, do not indicate some feeling, some aspirations! It often occurs to me that flowers must see and feel. Beauty without inward worth is so imper-

fect in man, that it is natural we should wish that flowers could possess something higher than their enchanting colours and beneficial aroma, to make them still more precious in the eyes of man.

At any rate, we ought adequately to value their life as well as that of the whole vegetable kingdom. God has enjoined on us this tender care.

Thus God's Divine commandments embrace with love the whole creation, not only mankind, but even beasts and plants. Love and goodness are to be practised everywhere; our whole earthly existence should resound as a continuous and unbroken song of praise, replete with love and gratitude towards God, even as our whole life should appear to us an unceasing proof of God's goodness.

I will lay down my pen for to-day, hoping to continue in a second letter the important topic of which this treats. Let me, dearest Ellen, conclude with the prayer, that as the

Divine love surrounds us on every side, and animates and penetrates all things, so may friendship and love sweeten and embellish our lives, dwell with unchanging fidelity in our hearts, and help to lead us with sincere gratitude and deep devotion nearer to God.

With a loving farewell,

Yours in true friendship,

ESTHER.

## NINTH LETTER.



GOD OUR FATHER.

(CONTINUATION OF THE EIGHTH LETTER.)



*Frankfort a/M., February 17th, 1865.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I will now endeavour to conclude all that I am able to say on the great and inexhaustible subject, contained in my last letter.

I begged you not to answer me before receiving my concluding remarks, and I will, therefore, without further delay, resume the thread of my ideas, and commend them to your earnest attention.

I have spoken of the encircling love which, together with His wisdom, God extends to all

His creatures, as well as of the manifold expressions which adorn the Bible, and strengthen and uphold us by the sublime proof they afford of our Heavenly Father's love.

In these passages, God is not only represented as our guide and lawgiver, but especially as our "Father"! What a sublime name! How our heart beats when we address Him! What a treasure of faithfulness and love lies in this small but, in significance, immeasurably great word! How this word contradicts the accusation sometimes heard, that the God of Israel is a God of vengeance, an ever severe and exacting judge! When the holy Scriptures call God *our Father*, that word implies far more than an earthly parent. God is our Heavenly Father. We not only pray to Him for that which we consider great and important—for the redemption of our souls from the heavy trials and overwhelming troubles that beset our path—but we also turn to Him in all daily occurrences, in the trifling vexations of common life. We bring all our griefs and joys before His exalted throne. Ought we not, therefore, to thank

Him for the good He gives us, and even praise Him for the trials He sends us? We know Him to be the true Father of *all* ; let us, then, never doubt His goodness, nor despair of His love ; for we are certain they are unchanging as He Himself !

A Christian friend once suggested to me the beauty of representing the Deity, not only as a picture of fatherly severity, but also of maternal gentleness. *This* idea, she said, was only found in Christianity, and could not possibly form a part of Judaism, as the God of Israel was chiefly distinguished by His severity, and especially by His rigour. In answer to this, I referred her to the following Biblical sentence, as a convincing proof of the contrary. In his sublime farewell to his people, Moses says :—“And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came to this place” (Deuteronomy i. 31). Does not the guidance of our Heavenly Father appear here under a garb of maternal tenderness ? Is it

not a mother's beautiful task to lift her child carefully over the obstacles that lie in its path? The Bible, speaking here of *man*, seems strikingly to unite the fostering care of a mother with the strength of a father. For to a *man* and *father* appertain strength, power and earnestness; to a *woman* and *mother*, patience, care and love.

In many sacred passages, God reveals Himself to us in His faithful tenderness, and makes known the wonders of His Providence by words addressed to us in human language, and fraught with the most maternal sentiments.—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee” (Isaiah xlix. 15). Is it possible that a mother should thrust from her the tender little being that clings in purity and innocence to her breast? Would this not be inhuman, unnatural? How immeasurably great must be the love that excels the most heartfelt and the most beautiful sentiment in life—Maternal Love! The royal Psalmist says

of the God-fearing man : “ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up ” ( Psalm xxvii. 10 ). We may be deprived of the shelter of the parental roof ; father and mother may be taken from us, but God’s fatherly heart ever remains our refuge, and His goodness will cherish us with a mother’s care.

How can non-Israelites, after reading the Bible (and we trust it is not a closed sanctuary to them), and finding therein these proofs, doubt that the God of Israel is a true Father, and that His holy providence is a motherly support to every living being ? You remarked in your last letter but one that the Christian regards God “ the Father,” as representing Justice, and Jesus “ the Son,” as representing Love ; and that we who do not believe in the Son are necessarily deprived of love. Dare we make such a division in God’s Unity ? Must we not rather acknowledge that He who works all in all, unites both these high attributes in Himself, and diffuses over us all equally the twofold benefits that flow from

them. Oh, surely, dear Ellen, our God, the Only One, the Eternal, Creator, Saviour, and Ruler of the Universe, is to us Israelites, and to the whole of mankind, the essence of all love and justice.

As the doctrine of justice is as comprehensive and full of meaning as that of love, I will, with your kind permission, devote a separate letter to this subject.\* I will not, therefore, now dwell upon the intimate connection that exists between justice and love—a connection so intimate, indeed, that they can scarcely be separated, being closely linked together in the order of Divine government. Let us, then, return to the consideration of that precious name of God—“Father”!

In our home, and in the Synagogue, we prefer to call the Almighty by this name. When He was angry with Israel and punished us heavily, because we had acted contrary to His

\* This tenth letter, written in the midst of the lamented author's greatest sufferings, was unfortunately left unfinished when she breathed her last.

will, our love and trust in Him never sank. The sacred Volume says : " Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee " (Deut. viii. 5). " Ye are children of the Eternal your God " (Deut. xiv. 1). Though a father may often punish his child, he still remains his dear parent. Should it, then, be otherwise with our Heavenly Father, who penetrates so much more deeply into our feelings, who searches the human heart to the core. The Bible further says : " My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction. For whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth " (Prov. iii. 11, 12).

Do you not see, then, dear Ellen, that the Eternal never ceases to call Himself our Heavenly Father ; and at the very time when He speaks of punishment, He introduces that blessed name, in order that we may be assured that *punishment* is no want of love. As we Israelites, through veneration of the Ineffable, dare not pronounce the real name of the Most

High, by which He revealed Himself to Moses in the bush, we adopt most willingly the name of *Father*. In one of our most solemn prayers, in which we bring before God all our earthly and heavenly concerns, each phrase begins with the words: "Our Father, and our King" (*Abinu ! Malkenu !*).

Our lips pour forth the words of love before we submit ourselves to the dominion of the Divine Majesty and Omnipotence, for His goodness forms the portal that leads to His justice.

When, on account of our sins, we had to endure years of wandering, to bear bitter sorrows and heavy trials, we knew that our Heavenly Father alone could rescue us; for our thoughts are more with Him in sorrow than in joy. The true Father listened to our lamentations with the greatest love, and inclined His ear with immeasurable mercy to the requests that were so often uttered with discontent and vehemence. In these happier days, when the heavens are clear, and the dark

clouds of misfortune and persecution are dispersed, when the glorious sun of liberty shines brightly over us, the Israelites should turn still more fervently to the Almighty, and address Him with still more heartfelt devotion, for we owe Him so much, that our hearts should overflow with gratitude. We are, alas! weak and oblivious creatures; we call to Him yearningly in sorrow, but we are often silent in joy, forgetting to whom we owe our happiness, although we remember and feel who sends us affliction.

Do we not know that the Almighty rejoices with His children if they recognise His goodness in their joy? Do not good children hasten to their earthly parents when they have to impart a joyful event, and do not these parents share their pleasure? How much more would the Eternal rejoice at the happiness and gratitude of His children! It must be truly pleasing to our beneficent Father in Heaven to see a cheerful countenance and a merry heart; for He beholds, too often, the pain and suffering which men inflict on one another.

You see, I do not spare those who *profess* our faith ; but that faith itself, relying on a merciful Father in heaven and earth, remains steadfast in its purity and glory. Its very greatness is shown in the fact, that it is so plain and simple, yet so exalted and holy. We can never doubt God's love, for He has revealed Himself to us both in sorrow and in joy.

We recognise no "*mediator*" to stand between us and God, to hear our prayers, to bear our burdens and to bring us consolation. The child calls, and the Father hears ; the Father speaks, and the child attends. Does an earthly parent ever call a mediator to reveal to him his child's thoughts ? Never ! He takes his son by the hand, places him by his side, and in low word, unheard, save by the child, he admonishes him.

And thus it is with the Eternal ; He is near us at all times ; His voice is audible within us, and we hear His words when in spirit we approach His throne.

Could we go thus directly to the Almighty and appeal to Him with such fearless confidence, if He were a cold and severe judge, without love for us? Would not terror oppress our hearts and close our mouths? But our soul knows no fear; it is occupied by one feeling only, and that is consolation at having a Father to whom we can and should impart everything. He surveys our faults with clemency, and His long-suffering patience renews our strength, so as to enable us to improve ourselves.

At all times the pious followers of our holy faith have regarded God as a God of love, a Heavenly Father, guiding us with love; and we are fully convinced that all we receive from His hand is sent us for the best.

He created the whole Universe in love and goodness: "And God saw all that He had made, and saw that it was good." The sages of the Talmud add: "What was *very* good was Death." Marvellous words! They say that even Death, the most sorrowful, the bitterest of all things, is very good. This word, that

makes us shudder and turn pale when we are full of life, even this is good, yea very good. Death that takes us away, sometimes in the prime of life, sometimes in our youth, when we have scarcely begun to enjoy life, and in our riper years, when we have just found the path to happiness and peace; in old age, when surrounded by our children and grandchildren, who rejoice our hearts so fervently and warm us by their love and attachment, even death is good—yea, very good.

Death, that parts us from all we hold dearest, from what we prize most, that robs the mother of her child, the child of his parents, the wife of her beloved husband, and the husband of his faithful wife! Death, that often shatters the cup of happiness and prosperity as we confidently seize it to carry it to our lips, cruel Death which, with its cold hand and gloomy look, effects all this, even this is good—yes, very good.

For Death is also a messenger from the Eternal, and must therefore be received with

love; as far as our human weakness permits, we must welcome it. God wishes to purify us by accustoming our minds, whilst we live, to the thought of death, by enabling us to reflect early in life on the uncertain hour when we may be parted from all our earthly treasures and most cherished possessions. Thus we are led to love Him more, and to resign all our trust, our hopes, desires, wishes, and projects into His hands, to rely on Him, to incline our whole hearts to the Blessed One, who remains true to us now and for ever.

We should never forget that what we consider bitter, hard, and painful, cannot be so in reality; for the Eternal is not cruel or unloving. He works all for our good, and all that comes from Him must necessarily be good, for “HE IS LOVE ITSELF!”

“Eternal our God, Thou lovest us with superabundant love; with overflowing goodness dost Thou carry us to Thy heart.”

I have now, my dear friend, according to

my humble abilities, explained this exalted subject. How happy, how blessed I should feel, if I were certain that my words had penetrated and convinced your heart of the infinite and all-surrounding love of the "God of Israel." He is indeed your God and your Father, for there exists only One Creator, One all-governing God, as He Himself has declared by the mouth of His prophet Malachi: "Have we not all One Father! Hath not God created us all!" (Malachi ii. 10.) Out of this divine, heavenly love shall ours, dearest Ellen, derive new strength and vigour, and as everything is united in God, so may His love give unity to our friendship, and in it may our hearts find the purest harmony and the holiest peace.

Such is the fervent prayer of

Your true and most affectionate friend,

ESTHER IZATES.

